Press release

Rapid reaction Met. men to be first sponsored reserves

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The Met. Office's Mobile Met. Unit (MMU) is to become the first Sponsored Reserve Unit in the armed forces. The MMU supports both UK and Allied Forces during times of conflict and on exercise throughout the world.

Formed in 1962 to support military exercises, the unit came into its own in 1982 during the Falklands War when it established a forecasting operation on Ascension Island within 72 hours of being called up. The unit moved on to RAF Stanley in the Falklands and remained there until 1985. Since then, the MMU has provided in-theatre support during the various conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans.

When deployed the MMU can quickly establish a 'mini Met. Office' using portable weather displays mirroring those used by the forecasters 'back at home'. The weather displays include the NATO Met. Information System (NAMIS) which was developed by The Met. Office and is now used by NATO as standard.

Peter Ewins, Chief Executive at The Met. Office, welcomed the new arrangement saying: "The relationship between Strike Command and The Met. Office has always been excellent. In becoming the first Sponsored Reserve Unit, our Mobile Met. Unit will ensure that front-line forces continue to receive the best possible meteorological support that's available."

Sponsored Reserve Units are being developed in line with the Strategic Defence Review, and the policy of making greater use of skills in the civil sector. The MMU was soon identified as a prime candidate for conversion. Sponsored Reserve Units will provide specialist support to the armed forces on operations, as a continuation of their work in peacetime.

The concept of Sponsored Reserves changes the conventional relationship between the reservists, their employer and the MoD as Jim Sharp, Chief Met. Officer at Strike Command, explains: "In a sponsored Reserve Unit there is a three-way partnership, where a company or agency agrees to provide capability and skilled staff through a formal agreement with the MoD. The individuals concerned also have an agreement with the relevant arm of the forces to serve for an agreed period, and with the employer who, in the case of the MMU, is responsible for paying the reservist and providing the tools of the trade."

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